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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5089
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU PRIORITY
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 000182

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DEPT. FOR EUR/SE AND NEA/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/31/2018

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY'S OUTREACH TO THE KURDS OF THE SOUTHEAST:
GRAPPLING WITH THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE PKK PROBLEM

REF: A. ANKARA 132
[1](#)B. ANKARA 99
[1](#)C. ANKARA 87
[1](#)D. ANKARA 134
[1](#)E. 07 ANKARA 2935
[1](#)F. ANKARA 31
[1](#)G. 07 ANKARA 2707
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[1](#)J. ANKARA 64

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Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Turkish military operations in northern Iraq have opened new space in Turkey's political discourse. In sharp contrast to the situation throughout most of 2007, topics such as a focused economic development plan for southeastern Turkey, expanded Kurdish language broadcasting and education rights, an enhanced repentance law or amnesty for PKK rank and file, and possible direct dialogue with Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) officials are now on the public and private agenda. Of course, making real progress on these issues will require definitive and difficult decisions by PM Erdogan, which will open him to entrenched opposition. And there is no quick or easy fix, as broad reform will take years to totally implement. END SUMMARY

The GOT's Social Restoration Plan for the Southeast

[1](#)2. (C) As FM Babacan recently told visiting S/I Satterfield, GOT officials believe a comprehensive solution to the PKK problem is required. This means using economic, social/cultural, and other tools, in addition to military action. "We need to use these tools in a well-coordinated manner to remove this issue as a long-term threat." (Ref A). DCHOD Saygun suggested to S/I Satterfield that the military is in general agreement with the government on the need for a

broad approach, although with significant redlines. Most GOT officials believe greater focus on economic and social development in Turkey's southeast will have the greatest positive impact on ethnic Kurds' views towards the Turkish state. If Kurds are gainfully employed, have better educational opportunities, and see increased levels of infrastructure development throughout their region, their affinity for the terrorist PKK will wane further.

13. (C) Deputy Prime Minister Nazim Ekren has traveled several times in recent weeks to the southeast with a delegation of officials from the State Planning Organization, the Treasury, the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency, and the Capital Markets Board. Also accompanying him on at least one visit were representatives from Ziraat Bank, Halkbank, Iller Bankasi, and the Turkish Development Bank. In each province, the GOT has established advisory councils under the governor which brings together government, business, and civil society organizations to help determine development and legislative priorities. Consulate Adana contacts in the southeast indicate region residents see this as a genuine effort at outreach and consultation by the government. Ekren plans repeat visits to the region to determine what more is required, telling the Ambassador that the GOT's vision in reaching out in this way is to achieve "social restoration of the region."

14. (C) The GOT has ambitious plans, many of them laid out in the GOT's Action Plan. A top priority is ensuring completion of the massive Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP) within five years. Ekren told us he is also looking at creating a competition agency for the region, to identify competitive sectors and how to support them. Other measures aimed at the southeast may include:

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- electricity subsidies;
- investment subsidies, including credit guarantee and initiative capital programs;
- increased support for agriculture, including an expansion in the use of interest-supported agricultural credits;
- financing for small and medium sized enterprises;
- opening of irrigation projects to private sector investment;
- better health care access through more equitable distribution of family medical care;
- efforts to enhance the ability of women to access social development programs; and,
- establishing nine new universities, ensuring that each province has at least one.

Contacts in Ekren's office tell us they expect PM Erdogan to announce details about the GOT's Southeast Economic Package sometime in February. Ekren expressed interest in benefiting from U.S. experience, particularly regarding the Tennessee Valley Authority.

15. (C) On January 17, PM Erdogan met with governors of all 81 provinces to discuss enhancing the government's Koydes and Beldes projects, as well as to discuss the current security situation. Koydes is the project designed to bring roads, water, and other basic infrastructure improvements to small villages throughout Turkey. Beldes is a similar program for small towns that fall outside other municipal authority and therefore lack basic services. The programs have been particularly successful in the southeast and are attributed as being a primary reason for the AKP's success in the region in July 2007 elections. GOT officials believe what worked before will work again.

Kurdish Language Rights

16. (C) Limited Kurdish language broadcasts continue and the state-controlled network, TRT, reportedly plans to begin

satellite broadcasting in Kurdish and seven additional languages, including Armenian. TRT officials have not yet been willing to discuss detailed plans for establishing 24/7 Kurdish language television broadcasting, but columnists in many major Turkish language dailies opine that Kurdish language broadcasting is an idea that should have been implemented years ago and criticize the GOT for having ceded that influential medium to Denmark-based PKK-linked Roj TV for so long. Many AKP members agree. As AKP vice chair Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat (an ethnic Kurd) told us (Ref B), since anyone can buy a satellite dish and pull in Roj, why not free up Kurdish language broadcasting? "We should be doing our own propaganda."

¶7. (C) Kurdish language education remains a more difficult proposition for the GOT to contemplate. Contacts in the southeast note that government support for the use of Kurdish in education remains almost non-existent and pin their hopes for greater cultural freedom on constitutional reforms and eventual EU membership. The AKP's draft constitution reportedly leaves open the right to education in mother tongues, though it reaffirms the primary language of education is Turkish. The draft provides, "the principles for the right to education in languages other than Turkish will be regulated by laws and on the basis of democratic social order." However, the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party's (DTP) proposal in mid-January to allow the use of Kurdish in official documents was slammed by AKP MPs as unconstitutional. After the mayor of Sur in Diyarbakir Province was fired for using Kurdish in official correspondence, DTP MP Hasip Kaplan said if a mayor can publish a brochure in English or French, then why not Kurdish?

Dialogue with Iraqi Kurds...and the KRG?

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¶8. (S) GOT officials are gradually warming to the idea that Turkey must engage Iraqi Kurds to help solve the PKK issue (Ref C). Although GOT officials have not commented publicly on a visit by President Talabani to Ankara, they tell us privately a visit will happen "soon," likely before mid-March. We also continue to hear private comments from GOT officials and public comments in the press of the recognized need for Turkey to engage with KRG officials directly. FM Babacan told S/I Satterfield that remarks by KRG President Massoud Barzani and KRG disinterest in, if not support for, the PKK make it difficult for Turkey to engage openly with him and other KRG officials. While cognizant of steps the KRG has taken to hinder PKK operations and freedom of movement in northern Iraq, GOT officials say they have yet to learn of any concrete results. Nevertheless, private channels between the GOT and KRG exist and many GOT officials believe it is only a matter of time before contacts move into the public sphere.

¶9. (S) DCHOD Gen. Saygun's January 15 visit to Baghdad was a successful start to what we hope will be increased Turkey-Iraq military coordination and cooperation (Ref D). Meeting in Baghdad as TUAF jets struck PKK targets in northern Iraq, Saygun and his Iraqi counterpart Gen. Abadi agreed on common goals in their fight against terrorism and affirmed mutual interest in more extensive mil-mil cooperation, including in training and operations. Saygun invited Abadi for a reciprocal visit to Turkey by March. While TGS remains adamant that the Turkish military will not talk to the KRG itself, Saygun told S/I Satterfield TGS will not oppose other GOT officials engaging directly with the KRG.

¶10. (C) Meanwhile, GOT-GOI ties continue to strengthen. Iraq's Minister of Trade is expected to visit Ankara in mid-February, during which GOT officials hope to reach agreement to be able to sign a framework agreement on economic cooperation. The Turks continue to work hard to make the Iraq Neighbors process a success, and is planning to

host the next meeting of the energy working group in Istanbul March 1-2. The GOT has pressed Iraqi Turkmen to return to the Kirkuk Provincial Council and looks forward to consulting and working with UNSRSG de Mistura on establishing a viable process that can lead to resolving the Kirkuk issue by consensus.

Enhanced Repentance or Amnesty?

¶11. (C) GOT officials have offered no further specifics on the statement by PM Erdogan (Ref E) that an expanded amnesty for PKK rank and file was under consideration. DCHOD Saygun cautioned S/I Satterfield that amnesty remains a delicate issue but stated that "related measures" are under consideration. Debate continues over how to structure a program aimed at demobilizing PKK fighters while avoiding the politically charged "amnesty" term. Under the current repentance law, Article 221 of the Turkish Penal Code, around 350 PKK fighters have reportedly availed themselves of the opportunity to return home and avoid prosecution as a PKK member since its inception in 2005. Most Turks who follow the issue closely believe the vast majority of PKK fighters will not sign up to a process that requires them to inform on their former fellow militants and recognize the need for a new approach. PM foreign policy advisor Davutoglu told Charge privately January 4 that the Prime Minister had directed the Special Committee on Terror to look at past and existing laws, determine why they were not as effective as might have been hoped, and consider revisions that could make it more effective (Ref F). AKP MPs recently told the Charge that they recognize the need to address amnesty and said, "We are late in moving forward on this."

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